

Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 OMB-01 TRSE-00 AID-05 /085 W

-----081153Z 070775 /10

R 081122Z MAR 77

FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9741

INFO AMEMBASSY LOME

AMEMBASSY COTONOU

AMEMBASSY PARIS

CONFIDENTIAL LAGOS 2626

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, TO, DM, NI

SUBJECT: TOGO-BENIN RELATIONS STRAINED OVER "COUP ATTEMPT."

REF: LAGOS 2495

1. TOGOLESE AMBASSADOR APEDO AMAH ON MARCH 7 RELATED TO CHARGE
A COMPLEX SERIES OF EVENTS HE SAID WERE ASSOCIATED WITH CURRENT
STRAIN IN TOGO-BENIN RELATIONS AND CLOSURE OF THEIR MUTUAL BORDER.

2. AMBASSADOR SAID IMMEDIATELY AFTER JANUARY COUP ATTEMPT,
PRESIDENT EYADEMA PHONED PRESIDENT KEREKOU TO EXPRESS CONDOLENCES
AND CONCERN AND SAY HE WANTED TO COME TO COTONOU TO SEE WHAT HAD
HAPPENED AND HOW THINGS WERE. KEREKOU WAS COLD AND DISCOURAGED
HIM, SAYING THIS WOULD NOT BE NECESSARY. A FEW DAYS LATER A
TOGOLESE DELEGATION UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF MINISTER OF INTERIOR
FLEW TO COTONOU FOR THE SAME PURPOSE BUT WAS NOT ALLOWED TO LAND
BECAUSE "THE RUNWAY WAS NOT IN GOOD CONDITION." FINALLY, ABOUT
TWO WEEKS AGO, THE SAME DELEGATION WAS ALLOWED TO VISIT
COTONOU. KEREKOU RECEIVED THEM, SAYING HE WOULD NOT HAVE
ALLOWED THEM TO COME IF HE HAD STILL THOUGHT TOGO WAS
IMPLICATED IN THE COUP. IT WAS APPARENT THAT HE HAD EARLIER
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SUSPECTED TOGO AND THIS WAS THE REASON FOR HIS REJECTION OF
EYADEMA'S OVERTURES.

3. APEDO AMAH THEN MENTIONED THE UN INVESTIGATION AND
REPORT ON THE COUP, THE CONCLUSION OF WHICH HE DID NOT KNOW.
HE SIMILARLY HAD NO INFORMATION ON THE OAU INQUIRY AND REPORT
AND HAD NOT HEARD THAT GABON AND MOROCCO HAD BEEN IMPLICATED.

THE AMBASSADOR OPINED THAT MOROCCO WAS TOO FAR AWAY FOR INVOLVEMENT IN THE AFFAIR. APEDO AMAH THEN CITED A THIRD REPORT, OF UNKNOWN ORIGIN, THAT HAD SOMEHOW COME INTO KEREKOU'S HANDS, ALLEGING THAT THE COUP WAS HATCHED IN A SECRET MEETING BETWEEN GABON, TOGO AND A WHITE MERCENARY LEADER. KEREKOU SENT THE REPORT TO NIGERIAN HEAD OF STATE OBASANJO, SAYING HE HAD PROOF OF ITS ACCURACY, BUT HE DID NOT ADDUCE ANY. ALTHOUGH COMMISSIONER FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS GARBA HAD JUST RETURNED FROM THE AOU MEETING IN LOME, OBASANJO SENT HIM IMMEDIATELY BACK TO INFORM EYADEMA OF THE CONTENTS OF THIS REPORT. EYADEMA RESPONDED BY SENDING OBASANJO THE SAME DELEGATION THAT HAD VISITED KEREKOU TO REITERATE TOGO'S INNOCENCE IN THE AFFAIR AND OFFER TO DO ANYTHING POSSIBLE TO ESTABLISH THIS. OBASANJO SAID HE WOULD DO WHAT HE COULD TO CALM KEREKOU, WHO WAS CHARGING THAT TOGO WAS HARBORING BENINESE DISSIDENTS. EYADEMA OFFERED TO TURN OVER ANY SUCH WHOM KEREKOU WOULD NAME, BUT THE LATTER REFUSED TO DO SO.

4. AMBASSADOR APEDO AMAH SAID THAT IS PRESENT STATE OF PLAY. THE TOGO-BENIN BORDER IS CLOSED AND NO ONE KNOWS HOW LONG IT WILL REMAIN SO. THE AMBASSADOR SUSPECTS THAT KEREKOU IS USING SPURIOUS REPORT AS AN EXCUSE TO CLOSE THE BORDER AND CUT TOGO OFF FROM ITS TRADE WITH NIGERIA, WHICH HAS NATURALLY BEEN SERIOUSLY DISRUPTED.

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